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RELIGIOUS MINORITIES IN BESSARABIA DURING THE “REACTION” OF NIKOLAI I (THE CASE OF JEWISH POPULATION)

Ion GUMENÂI*

Abstract. *In this article the author first examines the general framework that characterizes the reign of Tsar Nikolai I in the Russian Empire. At the same time, the author establishes the main directions in different areas, the attitude and position of the autocrat regarding the religious policy, the attitude towards dominant Orthodox Church and towards other religious currents. Continuing with the religious side, the author focuses on the legal issue and on the situation of the Jews in Bessarabia during Nicolai I. For a consistent and accurate speech, there are highlighted the main legal provisions and rules which regulated the evolution of Jewish community in Bessarabia over 30 years. To determine more exactly the status of this demographic segment between the Prut and Dniester, the comparative method is used, as to the rest of representatives of the Jewish faith from the Russian Empire so to the local population, so as to determine the attitude more or less favorable of the imperial authorities towards the Jews, as well as the causes that generated this.*

Keywords: *Russian Empire, legislation, Judaism, local population, political, religious*

A historical research or a study of empires is not a novelty today, as well as the investigations carried out with regard to these national superstructures for a specific segment of time or for a period when the same were ruled by figures with a positive or negative tinge, depending on the qualificatives given by current researchers. Today are various the works which try to conceptualize empires, other than the traditional one, with daring interpretations, both in the general historical appreciation of them and appreciation of different branches and actions within them. In the first and in the latter cases, we would like to

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point out a major drawback, namely the generalization that in a more thorough research with an emphasis either on geographical, or on demographic, ethnic or confessional element, can highlight a completely different result.

In our case we would confine to a particular territory, to a certain ethnic-religious segment and to a segment of time of 30 years during the reign of Tsar Nikolai I. As to the territory, it is contained within the space between the Dniester and the Prut, or Bessarabia. The ethnic-religious element chosen represents only the Jewish population, because of the limited space given for such a research and the probability to overload the proposed speech by including all religious minorities from Bessarabia of that time on the one hand, and on the other hand by the availability of a vast number of documents related to this segment. Thus for the period of Nikolai I, more than 600 decrees and other state regulations referring to Jews, can be listed (Левада, 1874.).

As for the person of Nikolai I, it also has not been chosen by chance, being known that it was the period of maximum expression of Russian autocracy as inside its guberniyas so to the peripheries and on the international level.

Generally the personality of the King succeeded to the throne of St. - Petersburg, is still a controversial figure in contemporary historiography. Due to the fact that during his reign a number of reforms had been performed in the Russian Empire having a progressive character that allowed to improve things, as for example the legal regulations (The full collections of the Russian Empire laws and of the Russian Empire code of Laws had been published), an important breakthrough in transportation (the construction of the first railway line and of developed network of roads) or another significant breakthrough in culture, some of the researchers believe that the period of his reign may be regarded as one with a positive character¹, and some, we mean primarily the representatives of the monarchical movement, even consider him “the knight of autocracy and the savior of the nation”². It is however clear that the measures, undertaken by the Tsar immediately after his enthronement and throughout his reign, were of course backward as compared to its predecessor and his successor. In this respect we refer primarily to such measures as the overall number reduction in the State Council, an advisory democratic body constituted by Alexander I. The system of ministries, created by the same king, was replaced with a new organ - Imperial Majesty's Chancellery. This consisted of Bureau I representing the personal chancellery of the king; Bureau II dealing with the codification of rules; Bureau III supervising the political police and gendarmerie, two instruments that became extremely influential during Nikolai

¹ Ерошкин Н.П., *Российское самодержавие*, Издательство РГГУ, Москва, 2006 on <http://www.regiment.ru/Lib/A/52/1.htm> (last access 03.05.20011)

² http://www.imperiya.net/nikolaj_1.htm (last access 18.04.2011)

I; Bureau IV dealing with charitable institutions³. The institution was founded and run by such principles that it actually represented the body through which the whole Russian Empire was governed. Then, in 1828 the new regulation on primary and secondary schools was introduced, by which actually was established an educational system based on the principles of social belonging. As an amendment, in 1835 was entered the new Regulations on universities, which greatly reduced the autonomy of the university, the institutions being subjected to strict political control. Generally, by the end of the reign of Nikolai I the process had increased even more, the university autonomy was practically liquidated, the access to higher education being reduced to a maximum⁴. That course was adopted because of the firm conviction of the Emperor that the dangerous reformist and revolutionary ideas were implemented in particular through educational institutions, and for that reason he was always saying “I need people to be loyal not smart.” In this context, an excessive bureaucratic apparatus had been instituted, by which the Tsar would control all the branches and departments of the Empire. Or, as shown by some researchers, the suppression of the Decembrist rebellion and the personal participation of the autocrat to their hearing, had shown that the entire noble class was under the influence of Western Europe thinking, so of the Revolution, which made him not be able to support it as the Emperor was saying “The revolution is on the verge of Russia, but I swear that it will not enter into it, as long as I am alive and until by the God mercy I am the king”. For these reasons the great nobility was removed from all key executive positions by central and local order, being mostly replaced by officials, basically of military origin so that all the empire was framed into a docile and disciplined bureaucratic-military system in order of the autocrat, so that Vasily Klyuchevsky showed that the bureaucracy “is the power that has lost the goal of its activity, for which reason it has become aimless, but has continued to be strong⁵.”

The thing not least important for our study is the position of Nikolai I to the Church. As show by F.I. Tyutchev for Nikolai I that was mostly antipathetic to the revolutionary spirit: “Revolution is first and foremost enemy of Christianity. The anti-Christian spirits is the soul of the revolution: this is its distinctive character”. For those reasons the tsar accepted without hesitation the propagandist and ideological formula proposed by S.S. Uvarov, Minister of Education in 1833, which had the formula “Orthodoxy – autocracy – nation” (Миллер, 2006), which we believe should oppose the Western formula: “Liberty - Equality – Fraternity”. We believe that it is no mere chance that the

³ Н.Павленко; И. Андреев; В.; Кобрин; В. Федоров, История России с древнейших времен on <http://wordweb.ru/andreev/index.htm> (last access 21.05.2011)

⁴ Ibidem.

⁵ Ерошкин Н.П., *op.cit.*

first official anthem of the Russian Empire is composed in the same year "Боже, Царя храни" (Go Save the Tsar). In this sense, Nikolai I really saw in the Orthodox Church one of the main institutions he could rely on and by which the Russian autocracy in the Russian Empire could be maintained. For these reasons the institution was given a great of attention, a series of decrees and laws being issued⁶ aimed to make the Orthodox Church one of the most powerful and dedicated institution, which in fact happened, the period when the Holy Synod could be compared with a simple ministry in the hands of the tsar. Otherwise were seen the other religions and confessions, naturally and

⁶ From the financial point of view during the reign of Nikolay I the state costs for the needs of the Orthodox Church increased about three times, and subsidies for the Holy Synod increased about twice and a half, from 1.7 million to 4.1 million silver rubles. The wage for parish priests was introduced, and in addition to that an annual pay of 500 000 rubles was introduced for the needs of poor parishes. The imperial decree was issued in 1829 which united the smallest and poorest parishes to create the strong ones.

At the same time measures were taken to raise the prestige of those institutions. In 1826 there were introduced severe penalties to clergy that denigrated its status. The Imperial Ordinance issued in 1831 by which the priests could not be reformed, were enrolled in the army as well as their children who had the same behavior. To stop priests "migration" from one parish to another, the Passport system was introduced to them. At the same time the administrative structure of the church was changed. The College of synod bishops transformed practically in a consultative body attached to the Ober-prosecutor. The Synod, like the Ministries, was divided into departments, and Ober – prosecutor with the rights of a minister was introduced to the Committee of Ministers.

Also during the reign of this tsar, the diocesan leadership was put under a double allegiance, of the Ober - prosecutor and gubernator, for that reason the diocesan boundaries were modified because of their coincidence with the guberniyas. Because of that the number of new religious-administrative units increased of 1.5 times. That way the diocesan bishops actually turned into gubernator's assistants for religious issues, and for the "safety" of the bishops, there was instituted a supervision by Bureau III of his Majesty's Imperial Chancellery. Thus actually the maximum submission of the Russian Orthodox Church to secular power in the Russian Empire was reached.

Nikolay I had a negative attitude towards the religious fanaticism and obscurantism, but neither accepted the "libertinism" in matters of faith and also towards any attempts against the Orthodox institution and his positions. For those reasons in 1825, in 1853 and in 1831, there were established special secret committees for developing measures to fight the different unorthodox movements from the Russian Empire and particularly against the dissenters (Old believers). Also at the initiative of the Emperor, in 1842 the Holy Synod issued the act of separating and grading of the most harmful, less harmful and acceptable heresy and sects from the Russian Empire, aiming to take appropriate actions depending on the degree of danger.

logically so, because those already by their existence could harm the authority and power of the Orthodox Church.

This can be stated at a general level in the Russian Empire, but what was the actual situation in the provinces and in our case in Bessarabia? And here we shall make a statement to say that the term "reaction" has been quoted not to refer to the territory and the local Orthodox Bessarabian population but to the representatives of the religious minorities compared with the general situation in the empire and with the local population.

So, as mentioned above, most of the references to a religious minority are related to Jewish population. Our attention has been drawn by the fact that some young researchers, taking without a critical attitude the position of G. Bogdan - Duica generally consider the Tsarist policy in Bessarabia towards the Jewish people as being very anti-Semitic (Bogdan-Duică, 1913: 51). Thus, the first instrument of the reign of Nikolai I, which referred only to the Jewish settlers, was of January 12, 1826, which depicted the deplorable situation of the Jewish colonies in Novorussia, showing that Jews were not accustomed to agricultural work, that there was a high mortality rate, and four years of drought could be added. Therefore, it was decided those settlers not pay state taxes but in the next 10 years to pay a single tax of 15-20 kopecks for a dessiatina of land, like the rest of the settlers (*Полное Собрание Законов*, 1830: том 1, Nr. 52). Or, by this law we can see nothing that could show a negative connotation to this segment of the Jewish population.

In the same year, a new censorship law was introduced that stiffened the administrative control over the press and literary activity, which among the intellectuals was dubbed "The iron law". The Paragraphs 194 -200 of Chapter IV referred to the Jewish press and writings and by which Jewish books that did not pass the censorship committee were forbidden to circulate in the Russian Empire, while the following books being allowed to be published: a) books of Holy Scripture without comments; b) Books of prayer "without other additions", c) polemic books of various Jewish movements that correspond to the censorship. It was strictly prohibited the publication of books that were against Christianity or against God. There were forbidden books that recommended to Jewish a negative attitude towards the representatives of other faiths, or books that recommended not to testify for a Christian, or that permitted to deceive Christians (Леванда, 1874: Nr. 143).

It goes without saying that if those laws taken separately, without being included in the general context of the law, then there could be seen an obvious discrimination of what would have been literary and journalistic product of Jewish element. In the general context, the whole framework which that new censorship law referred to has been put in the same situation of coercion. From another point of view, if we try to make a comparison with native Bessarabian element, a very different situation is outlined. In this context, we give only one example, the law of

June 10, 1826 did not limit the use of language for works. But for the space between the Prut and Dniester in limitation in circulation of Romanian books is known since 1823, when the wife of a Moldovan tax-collector, Zoitsa Paleolog could pass the board to Bessarabia with only 15 of the 24 books she wanted to take, getting hardly an approbation even for this (Constantinescu-Iași, 1929: 12).

Or after the enthronement of Nikolai I and especially after commissioning in 1828 the “The Vorontsov Regulations”, the disuse or prohibition of the Romanian language, including of the literature in that language was one of the main directions of the tsarist administration (Danilor, 2007). In this case, what could be more important for a nation than the language it speaks?

In 1827 on 26 August there were issued the Regulations on recruitment and military service of Jews (Полное Собрание Законов, том 2, Nr. 1330). It comprised 14 chapters and stipulated that beginning with the year of 1827 the Jewish people from will be treated under the law equally as the rest of the population of the Russian Empire, canceling the total release of the Jews from military service, replacing the existing practice at the time of payment in money, by requesting this segment of the population to perform the military service in nature. The Regulations also established the rules under which the Jews military representatives will be recruited and the penalties that were to be taken in case of evasion and sheltering of those who tried to evade the performance of this service.

After dealing with issues on the categories that could be released from the military service, providing the oath of allegiance and the manner of execution of service in the army, some facilities were given for Jews who had performed military service, last chapter set out the arrangements for religious life of Jewish faith representatives in the army institutions (Полное Собрание Законов, том 2, Nr. 1330).

Practically, the Jewish population was put under the same conditions regarding the military service in the Russian Empire with other coexisting nations and religions.

From another point of view the Jewish people from Bessarabia neither beginning with 1827 nor in subsequent years were recruited in the tsarist army, being exempted from this service together with the local population. Only on October 18, 1851 an imperial decree was issued stating that no impediments are found to recruit Jews from Bessarabia for military service, that is why it was required that starting with the next year when the tenth military recruitment for Western Region the empire was to be done, to take from among the Jews the number of recruits stated in the Imperial Manifesto (Полное Собрание Законов, том 26, Nr. 25655). That happened when four days later the Official Opinion of the State Supreme Soviet was issued, which stated the necessary measures of punishment to be taken in cases of the Jews evasion of military service (Леванда, 1874: Nr. 654).

On the other hand, it is not known what the impediments that did not allow in Bessarabia the recruitment of Jews in the Russian army were, but in 1854 on November 13 and then December 9, the Senate issued the decrees by which the Jewish population of Bessarabia was again released from military service in the tsarist army (ПОЛНОЕ СОБРАНИЕ ЗАКОНОВ, том 29, Nr. 28812). It is clear, however, that until the mid-70s of the nineteenth century Jewish population of Bessarabia was not enrolled in the tsarist army, a fact which we believe was more favorable than in the Russian Empire.

In 1830 there was adopted a number of important laws. So on September 6, the Minister of Interior issued the law by which allowed the Jews enrolled in the army to join on their will to any Christian religion tolerated within the borders of the Russian Empire (ПОЛНОЕ СОБРАНИЕ ЗАКОНОВ, том 5, p. II, Nr. 3896). A few days later, on September 25, as an amendment to the previous law, this time by the order of the Senate, there was granted the privilege of exemption from taxation of the Jewish population who will take Christianity (ПОЛНОЕ СОБРАНИЕ ЗАКОНОВ, том 5, Nr. 3951). If comparing the situation with other religious movements in fact we see that there are no differences, because in 1826 on 17 June the Supreme Soviet took the decision on tax exemption for a period of three years of Mohammedan and other pagan religions representatives (ПОЛНОЕ СОБРАНИЕ ЗАКОНОВ, том 1, Nr. 409).

Obviously, to increase the control over the process, on 14 October, there were issued rules on preclusion of the cases of simulation by Jews of receiving the Christianity which among other things requested: 1. To put in the responsibility of the spiritual leaders of Evangelical and Romano-Catholic churches, the education by the priests of Christian dogmas and traditions to Jewish. Upon accepting the same, a letter shall be written by the priest as well as positive recommendations from the clergymen. 2. The leaders of these churches shall not baptize Jews with poor knowledge of Christianity and baptize on Sundays when a lot of people is present, and in the same or the next Sunday to come to Communion. 3. To baptize the Jews only in the city churches. 4. The priests shall inform if they are to baptize a sick Jew who can not be baptized in public and who has to come to the church immediately after recovery (ЛЕВАНДА, 1874: Nr. 220).

In order to present the situation in this field in Bessarabia, we shall remember the decree of the Supreme Soviet of November 28, 1830 by which a series of privileges were granted to Jews who accepted Christianity and which stated: 1. All the Jews from Bessarabia who received Christianity before adopting the present order are to be exempted for life to pay taxes and fees. 2. While bringing this decree to the attention of all baptized Jews to oblige them choose the type of occupation and the society they will be registered to under the Act of September 26, 1829. 3. These exemptions are not applied on children of already baptized parents. 4. For those who will receive Christianity

after this law is adopted to be exempted from taxes for a period of three years, after which to provide all the services depending on the caste which they choose (ЛЕВАНДА, 1874: Nr. 224).

The last order referring the Jews was issued on December 20, 1830 by the Committee of Ministers and provided certain privileges to all the Jews who wish to migrate to Bessarabia from Nikolaev and Sevastopol and that repeated those set in the imperial decree of 26 September of the same year with reference to all the merchants of the Russian Empire who will want to settle in the region (ПОЛНОЕ СОБРАНИЕ ЗАКОНОВ, том 5, р. II, Nr. 4204). As the tsarist government did not fulfill all the promises, the Jews submitted a series of appeals to the higher courts, so on February 26, 1835 the Committee of Ministers issued the order by which the Jewish people from Ismail, who came there from Nikolaev and Sevastopol, received facilities for a period of 25 years (ПОЛНОЕ СОБРАНИЕ ЗАКОНОВ, том 10, Nr. 8886).

If talking about the facilities or privileges for the Jewish population in Bessarabia, then such laws can be found throughout the period under discussion. So, for example in 1837 at the initiative of Bessarabia General Gubernator Vorontsov, Jews were allowed to remain near the locality of Tuzla, an important salt center extracting, for increasing the commercial activity (ЛЕВАНДА, 1874: Nr. 342); on January 15, 1838 there was introduced *The law on exile from the capital of the Jewish having no passport* (ЛЕВАНДА, 1874: Nr. 361), fact which did not refer to Chisinau, where we have not reported such measures; on October 11, 1838 there was issued the law which allowed the Jews who held degrees from Russian academies and universities to be employed as doctors in the civil service in Novorussia Guberniya and Bessarabia Oblast (ЛЕВАНДА, 1874: Nr. 382); from January 7, 1839 the Jews of Bessarabia and Novorussia were allowed to open small markets on landowners property, thing necessary for stimulation of commercial exchanges (ЛЕВАНДА, 1874: Nr. 385); on February 17, 1842 the holders of the right to collect taxes for beverages from Bessarabia were allowed to keep a Jew aimed to consume beverages (ПОЛНОЕ СОБРАНИЕ ЗАКОНОВ, том 17, Nr. 15501).

Critical to the development of the Jewish population's situation in the Russian Empire was the year of 1844. In that year, on 26 June, there was issued the law on the location of the Jewish churches in relation to the Orthodox churches (ЛЕВАНДА, 1874: Nr. 496), on 13 November the Ministry of Education introduced the regulations regarding the Jewish schools (ЛЕВАНДА, 1874: Nr. 506), and on 19 December the law on the abolition of Jewish Kahal was adopted (ЛЕВАНДА, 1874: Nr. 510).

The last law actually abolished the Jewish self-government. Namely, the law was seen as one of the most reactionary in the period of Nikolai I, with reference to Jewish people. We would agree but still we presume to make some remarks. First we think it is one of the few ethnic groups that have retained autonomy up to that point, the more that these very freedoms were viewed very

negatively by Nikolai I, as it has been said. The law actually liquidated in major lines the administrative bodies of Jewish communities existing up to that point (such privilege was hard to find on the whole territory of the Russian Empire) and passing them under the administration of the local bodies that were part of the whole administration and ruling system formed by tsarism, which seemed, again, normally in relation to any other ethnicity or ethnic group, where the Russian autocrat wanted to have the grip on all the possible levers of society control. On the other hand these laws did not abolish or prohibit the Jewish societies that continued to exist.

From another point of view, if comparing the situation of the Jewish and Romanian population of Bessarabia after the adoption of "Vorontsov Regulations" since 1828, we can see that the situation of the last was much more impaired. It is enough to mention here only a few of the finer points. In terms of governance of the region: by the new regulations, the Supreme Council was replaced with a provincial council, officially called "Institution for Bessarabia region administration". Pursuant to the law the council was being convened only twice a year and had as a priority only economic and supply issues to discuss. The nobility was not present in this body, this layer being represented only by nobility Marshal, the only elected member of the council, and two permanent members appointed by the ruling Senate, after the proposals of the Governor General. The remaining members were appointed by the central authorities. Being deprived of any initiative, the body actually represented an authority with advisory rights with the right to make proposals on issues that were submitted by the Governor General, civil governor, provisional government or nobility Marshal. The Council decisions could be stopped by the Governor General and submitted by him at the corresponding ministry (Boldur, 1992). The resident position was abolished, and Bessarabia was transformed into a part of Novorussia. All power was now concentrated in the hands of the civil governor, who depended directly on the Governor General of Novorussia. Later, in 1836, he would become also the military governor, combining also the duties of Bessarabia military commander. Instead of district subprefects there were appointed Russians *nachalniks* (commandants), actually during this period Bessarabia was practically invaded on the level of administration by officials who came from the Russian Empire, mostly Russian (Nistor, 1991). At law, the courts were organized by the Russian model. In terms of language policy in 1828, in Chisinau, Bender, Balti, Hotin, Cetatea Alba and Ismail there were established only schools having Russian as the teaching language. With regard to them, in the years 1839-1841, there were presented petitions to the government for the introduction of Romanian language in popular schools. Eventually, however, in October 1842 there was

allowed the introduction of Romanian language, but in the seventh decade of the nineteenth century it will be completely and permanently excluded⁷.

Any national freedoms as well as Moldovan laws were suppressed. The Russian language was introduced in all public acts. “*Common guberniyal institutions for all Russia and the entire state tax system*” had been set up here. *The secretarial work had been done in Russian language*”. Meanwhile, the Romanian language was removed from the provincial administration. It was even forbidden by Article 63 of the new regulations, which stated: “All the records of the state establishments of Bessarabia province will be written in Russian”. But, however, ascertaining the impossibility of complete elimination of Romanian language out of the official documents, it will be used until 1834, and even casual until 1854. As an example of this policy may serve the fact that by the late nineteenth century, in the Chisinau public library, founded in 1832, among the 20,000 volumes contained in that institution, there was no book in Romanian language⁸.

Thus, taking into consideration the presented data, it can be easily concluded that the situation of the native population was not better than that of the Jewish people and even worse in some cases, if we consider the provisions with respect to Jewish education which provided among other things that “For teaching Jewish law disciplines at Jewish schools, teachers from among the Jews shall be chosen, who, if necessary, can be brought from other countries, especially from Bavaria, Prussia and Austria, for the own account of these institutions”, not to mention about the right to use the national language in education (Лева́нда, 1874: Nr.506).

After the liquidation of Jewish communities self-administration, there followed a series of laws from the tsarist government that aimed to track more precisely the Jewish population and especially to control the payment of taxes and the financial circuit. In this context, we can interpret the nominal order of the Minister of Interior of December 16, 1846 stating that the rescript comes at the initiative of the Emperor who had examined the proposal of the Committee for Jewish people settlement, for the census of the Jewish population in Bessarabia (Полное Собрание Законов, том 21, Nr. 20709), thing that would happen during the years 1847-1848. We do not know what the concrete cause was, but a few years later, in July 6, 1853 there will be ordered, this time by the Senate, a new census of the Jewish population of Bessarabia (Полное Собрание Законов, том 2, Nr. 27414). Perhaps the execution of the first order

⁷ Mircea Rusnac, *Perioada autocrației în Basarabia țaristă (1825 - 1873)* on http://www.istoria.md/articol/460/Perioada_Autocra%C5%A3iei_%C3%AEn_Basarabia_%C5%A2arist%C4%83 (last access 01.04.2011)

⁸ Idem, *Perioada reacționară în Basarabia* on http://www.istoria.md/articol/462/Perioada_Reac%C5%A3ionar%C4%83_%C3%AEn_Basarabia_%C5%A2arist%C4%83 (last access 20.05.2011)

was defectively performed, a new census of this segment of the population of Bessarabia being needed at short time after. This is actually not uncommon, inaccuracy or failure in fulfilling orders was a mere thing typical for bureaucracy at the local and the central levels. Otherwise, for example, we can not explain the nonobservance of the provision of the Committee of Ministers of 4 April 1839 on the removal of Jews living at the borders from Bessarabia (Полное Собрание Законов, том 2, Nr. 12201). The very issue of law was in fact nonsense, since by executing the provision, a major part of the territory of Bessarabia should be prohibited for Jewish population. On the other hand neither the officials did their best to execute it.

Such a situation is not specific to only two cases above, but exists as a matter of fact, when sameness and poor execution of the provisions by the officials of the bureaucratic body, depends mostly on the distance from the center, that is why Bessarabia and was an area that various dissidents, including religious one, tended to. Moreover, in cases where the law could not be breached, the state official could be bribed not to meet certain provisions or simply be "forgotten". For good reason, by the end of his life, the Emperor Nikolai I had been addressed his son exclaiming that "I think sometimes that in the whole Russia only you and I do not steal", which is confirmed by one of the autocrat's memoirist, who shows that the autocrat himself understood that his unlimited power was in fact limited by the "bureaucracy - the allover dreaded power, because all violations performed by the bureaucracy are called as compliance of order"⁹.

In the last part of his reign Nikolai I as already noted, dealt in particular with the population of Bessarabia regarding their recruitment in the imperial army, decree issued in 1851, which was eventually canceled by two subsequent laws 1854.

We have exposed the above data and information not to demonstrate that the situation of Jewish population in Bessarabia in the studied segment of time was a progressive and positive one. The facts set out above show only that this segment of population had, in our opinion, a better position compared to all the Jewish population of the Russian Empire and compared to the native population. This situation is not due to the fact that the administrative body representing the tsarist state power tried to replace the importance of the local element by the Jewish one, as it was actually tried in the northwest guberniyas of the Russian Empire and in the Kingdom of Poland, where it actually failed but with negative results for the Jewish Diaspora who the local population was directed against (Миллер, Долбилов, 2009).

⁹ М. Рахматулин, *Император Николай I и его царствование*, in «Наука и жизнь», № 1, 2, 3, 2002 on http://www.nkj.ru/archive/articles/4008/?sphrase_id=41017 (last access 01.04.2011)

Thorough analysis of the context and the diachronic development of events demonstrates that this status the Jewish population of Bessarabia has been framed in, results from the things specific to the Russian Empire and was highlighted by Geoffrey Hosking showing that the survival and intact maintenance of the empire's territory was the priority for all Russian leaders, an especially prominent thing, we would add, during the reign of Nikolai I, the goal that pushed to the sidelines any other issues of national, religious, economic or other origin (Хоскинг, 2001: 56-57).

And indeed we can state that the local Romanian population could not be the main support in the tendency to maintain the integrity of the territory, that being actually the main centrifugal force. In this case, the central power from St. - Petersburg, could not count on the support of local political elite, as it did elsewhere, luring it to its side by giving different privileges and different favors, as in Bessarabia there was no such elite. Nor was possible the displacement of the native element, knowing the importance the region between the Prut and Dniester had for the Russian policy in the Balkans. Thus the way out found and actually manifested most strongly in the period of Nikolai I, was the establishment of a balance represented by the population loyal to the tsar, which included the Jewish people. Namely, by means of it, we can find an impressive number of laws and provisions that reduced the importance of the Dominant Orthodox Church in the region had been brought, together with Jews, Protestant (Полное Собрание Законов, Nr. 2013, 2122, 7311, 17405) and Nekrasov Cossacks (Полное Собрание Законов, Nr. 6094) (mostly Old-Rite Orthodox) as well as the representatives of other sects (Полное Собрание Законов, Nr. 8096). To this we can add the violation of certain political principles and bringing and colonization in Bessarabia of a part of the Zaporozhian Cossacks returned from the Ottoman Empire (Полное Собрание Законов, Nr. 913), or population of the territory by Slavonic people that came from the south part of the Danube (Полное Собрание Законов, том 2, Nr. 2066; 3697; 3775; 3993.) and even a policy oriented to colonization of Russian peasants (Полное Собрание Законов, том 2, Nr. 592, 5394).

If to the situation to add the fact that Bessarabia, like Novorussia, was generally used by the tsarist government in the sense of "valve" to solve "the problem of Jews" and to reduce pressure on the central guberniyas of the empire, as well as the failures of the civilian-bureaucratic system of the Russian Empire, then it becomes clear what is the situation it is in, so on a more favorable level of life compared with the rest of the nationals of the rest of the empire and with the native population.

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